

Behind the Scenes

By REYNOLDS KNIGHT

Business activity has dragged a little through the summer and the pace has been slightly under the corresponding period a year ago. Circumstances that contributed to slowing business operations were the steel strike, a letdown in new orders for industrial products, and a spirit of caution among business men induced by slightly tighter governmental monetary and credit policies.

Retail sales have been strong but not up to last year's levels. Income of consumers has been holding up satisfactorily but actual expenditures have not been up to the 1955 performance. Department store sales in mid-summer have been running about 2 per cent above a year ago, as against 7 per cent average gains in June. However, with income holding up there is every expectation that the turn of Labor Day will start the usual seasonal upturn.

As for business as a whole, the built-in inflationary tendencies in the economy are offering strong support against any major downturn in business. Regardless of which political party assumes office, a high level of business activity is expected to be maintained.

BOOSTING INDUSTRY—A century ago, swift industrial expansion was made possible by broadening transportation arteries. Today, notes the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Assn., industry growth is being given impetus by America's ever-spreading natural gas pipelines.

Now that the Pacific Northwest is receiving natural gas, there's no section of the country without it. What this fuel will probably mean for this area in terms of industrial development can be seen from a look at the other side of the country.

It was only five years ago that New England first began receiving natural gas. Last year industrial sales in that section totaled 83 million therms (a therm is 100,000 British Thermal Units). This is up 42.8 per cent in a single year. The number of industrial customers was 4900, an increase of 16.6 per cent over the 1954 figure.

THINGS TO COME—For a matter of 100 years one of chemistry's most difficult problems has been separating two metals vital to modern industry—tantalum and columbium. The Bureau of Mines has just announced a successful revolutionary method available for commercial use. Here's another: Enamelling materials and an electric kiln the size of a hot plate are now being of-

ferred to those ladies of the house who would like to take up jewelry making as a hobby. . . . And for the wine drinker, there is now a double-spiral corkscrew, developed in Switzerland. It's said to ease out any cork in one piece.

BRAND-NAME DIPLOMACY—America's best ambassadors abroad are its consumer products. That's the consensus of 60 foreign businessmen who gathered recently in the heart of America's Midwest at the world export convention of the nation's biggest fountain pen maker.

Even in countries where our foreign policies have met with disapproval the products of American industry are in great demand, according to Sheaffer Pen Company distributors meeting in Fort Madison, Iowa. As an example, a distributor from Thailand reported that a captured Communist guerilla was found to

be carrying four Sheaffer pens.

In some parts of Asia and South America, a man's position often is gauged by his ownership of American brand products, the foreign merchants disclosed. Top quality American merchandise that can be openly displayed shows the world that the owner "has arrived!"

In some countries with low literacy rates pens are purchased by many who can't write, in the hope the pen will convince others that its owner is literate. Sheaffer's foreign sales director reported the company recently received an export order for 1000 pen caps—without the pens. They were to be sold in Asia to be clipped in breast pockets.

SHIFT TO WOOL—The American consumer is buying wool apparel again. With the development of man-made

fibers and promotional efforts of the cotton producers, wool had been losing some of the American market. But during the last year or so wool has not only held its own but has made gains in popularity. Wool woven cloth is now

being produced at a rate 25 per cent over that of last year. On the basis of this rate it is estimated that consumption will reach 314 million pounds this year compared to 285 million pounds in 1955. Output during 1954

amounted to 266 million pounds. The increased usage has resulted in apparel wool stocks falling to the lowest point on record at mid-year. Wool tops have climbed a matter of 14 cents a pound during the last

six months. **BITS O' BUSINESS**—Things are looking brighter. Paint sales in the nation during the first six months of the year were up 1.3 per cent for a record \$812,328,000. . . . If passenger car tire shipments

are any criterion the economy is still rollin'. They amounted to 7,884,512 during June, an increase of 3.5 per cent over the figure shipped in May. . . . This year's cotton acreage is the smallest in 75 years.

GARDENER'S CHECKLIST

1. All types of container grown ornamental shrubbery can be planted now.
2. Earwigs can be easily controlled with chlordane.
3. This is the time to plan or divide and reset German Bearded Iris.
4. Gladiolus bulbs should be dug up if the tops are brown. Before storing, sprinkle the bulbs with DDT powder to free them of thrips.
5. Most lawns will benefit from a late summer feeding.



PARTICIPATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN . . . In preparation of meals is to be encouraged even as in such instances as pictured above showing Junior coming up with his own recipe for serving his pals. Mother teaches him how to do it right in a new automatic gas range with chrome broiler rack that slides easily.

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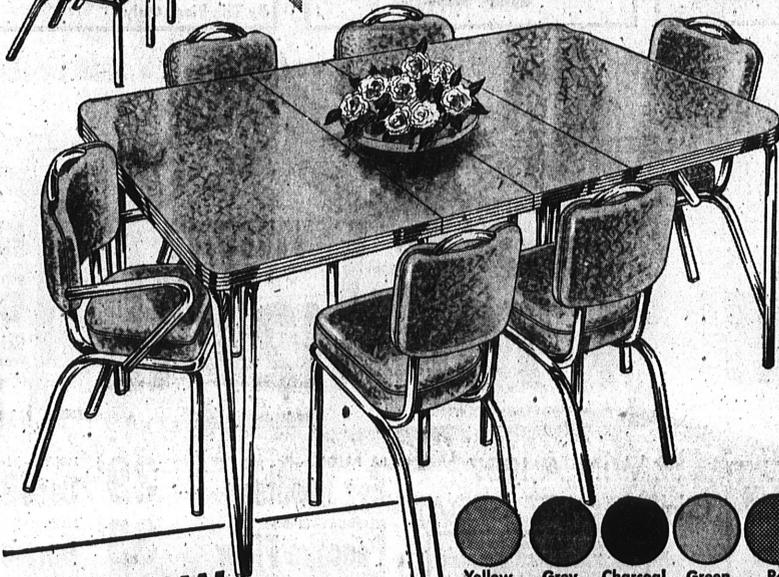
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